

HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT WORKBOOK REPORT FOR THE HOLLYWOOD DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

This report documents an exploratory effort to develop a historic building assessment workbook to help guide designation efforts by the Hollywood community. Rather than nominate buildings for local landmark status in some random fashion, the workbook attempts to provide a logical basis for prioritizing building selection.

Existing tools tend to be plagued by problems related to poor interface design, excessively slow response, poor underlying data quality, and an absence of analytical tools for putting all of the collected data to use. The workbook has been assembled in Microsoft Excel so that all data elements are clearly available to the user for review, verification, and comment.

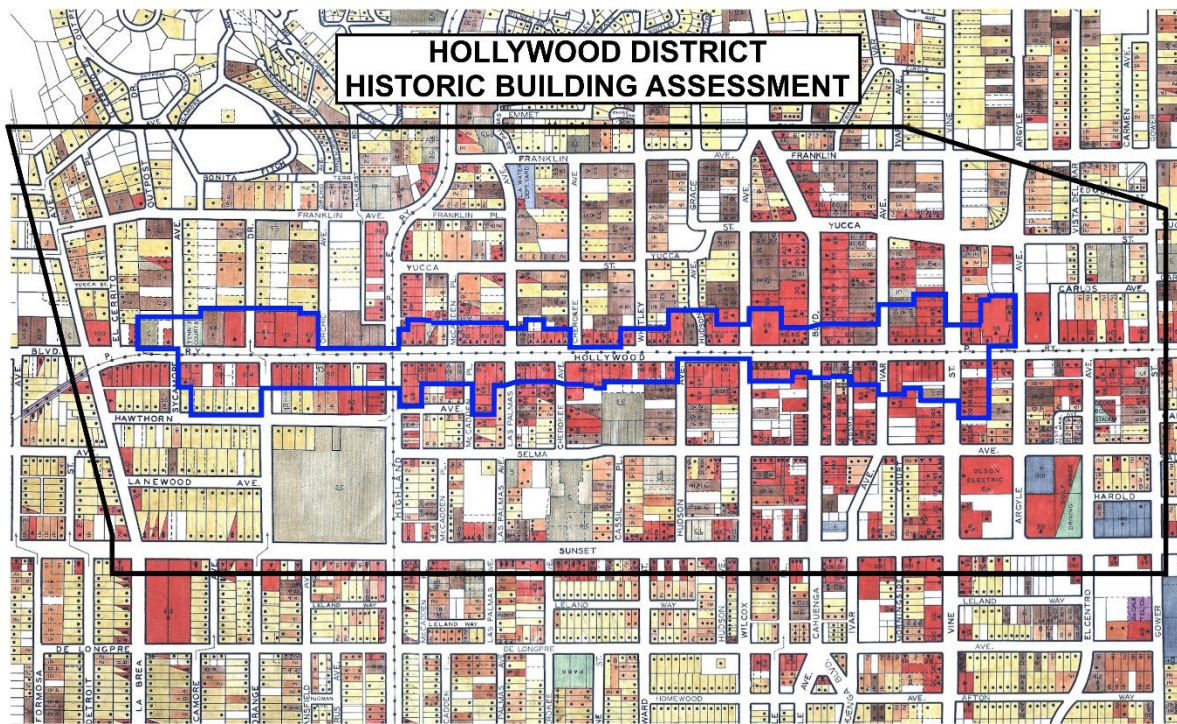
The selection of the Hollywood district was based on the desire to pick a well-known area for developing the methodology. Hollywood contains a National Historic District which runs for a length of about 1.5 miles along the boulevard. Tourism is of major importance to the area, so the developed set of metrics attempts to account for this importance. An assessment model developed for other areas may want to consider the inclusion of other metrics.

Table 1 presents the six major steps taken to create the historic building assessment workbook. Each major step is discussed in the paragraphs that follow. Figure 1, a map of the assessment area is presented on the following page.

Table 1 – Major Steps

1. Establish the assessment area. It is important to select an area large enough to be of interest but not so large as to make subsequent data collection difficult.
2. Identify all designated and eligible historic buildings within the area. Data sources include the National register, State register, local listings, and surveys.
3. Establish the criteria by which each building will be assessed. Specific criteria used in this workbook include building status, building function and size, visual condition, site accessibility, and current historic designation.
4. Fill in the data fields using various online resources such as the HistoricPlaces LA website, the State BERD database, historic survey reports, Google Maps, and real estate listings.
5. Convert the numeric data (step 4) to a qualitative rating of high (large), medium, or low (small), and then convert each rating to a score. The scores are used to rank the importance of a building relative to other buildings in the area.
6. Multiply the results of step 5 (importance) by a numeric score ranging from 0 for local designation (most protected) to 3 for no designation (least protected). The ranked results provide a prioritized list for local designation.

Figure 1 – Map of the Assessment Area



DEFINE THE DISTRICT

Defining the district began by mapping the National Historic District that runs along Hollywood Blvd (blue line). The district boundary was then extended outward to the lines shown in black. The boundary runs from the north side of Franklin Ave, west side of La Brea Ave, south side of Sunset Blvd, east side of Gower St, and intersection with the Hollywood Freeway. Both sides of the boundary streets are included to capture the full streetscape that defines the character of an urban space.

The methodology does not attempt to match the district to an area defined by a given Plan or regulation. Official areas include the Hollywood Redevelopment Area (HRA) per the 2018 Hollywood Community Plan and the Hollywood Community Plan Implementation Overlay (CPIO) zone defined in the 2025 Hollywood Community Plan Update. Areas set by regulation are very complex, changing block by block, and from plan to plan.

IDENTIFY ALL IMPORTANT BUILDINGS

Ideally, the assessment approach begins with an inventory of all buildings located within the defined area. Survey teams go into the field to canvass the area, taking photos and collecting data defined beforehand such as character defining features and building condition. At the

same time, status codes and prior survey findings are compiled. The end result is a comprehensive survey.

Few surveys follow this ideal approach because of access issues and expense. Survey LA, a very large survey of the Los Angeles area conducted several years ago, missed many buildings that were hidden from view. The areas that were surveyed were selected following a preliminary drive through of the area. The absence of a building from Survey LA cannot be taken as an indication that a building is not historic. Short of conducting a building-by-building survey, the workbook compensates for data gaps by compiling data from multiple surveys and sources.

The compiled data is based on buildings identified in the National register, the State register (i.e., the BERD or Built Environment Resource Directory), local Historic Cultural Monument (HCM) designations, local Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs), and multiple survey reports. The workbook includes both contributors and non-contributors within proposed and designated HPOZs as well as designated and rejected HCM nominations. Rejected HCMs are included because such buildings may become eligible for designation when new historic data comes to light or the building is significant in reference to a new cultural context.

With the important buildings within the area identified, the next effort was to standardize the building addresses to aid in sorting. Sorting entries in Excel requires each building to have one specific address, with the street number and street name placed in separate columns. Part of this effort included the correction of building addresses since survey reports and nominations often report the mailing address of a building, which may not be its official address.

In the City of Los Angeles, official building addresses are found on the Navigate LA website that is maintained by the Bureau of Engineering. All city services such as police and fire use this system. The addresses shown on the websites Historic Places LA and ZIMAS (Zone Information and Mapping Access System) are not official. This same warning applies to addresses obtained from Google maps and found online.

ESTABLISH ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Following the identification of potentially historic buildings within the defined area, the next step is to develop a methodology and collect the data needed to conduct the assessment. The assessment methodology considers four specific metrics: building status, building size relative to function, visual condition or aesthetics, and accessibility relative to Metro riders.

Building Status

A building may be classified as active, vacant, or demolished. The question of active or vacant is based primarily on ground floor condition. It is assumed that a building with an active ground floor enhances the streetscape even if the upper floors are vacant.

For a demolished building, no assessment is conducted. Demolished buildings were included in the workbook so as to track buildings that were once surveyed and/or designated but are now lost. The workbook does not include data for demolished buildings that predate the oldest surveys, nor does it include the date of demolition.

Building Size Relative to Function

Every building serves one or more functions. Functions include residential use, retail space, office space, theater, and other uses. For each function or category of use, specific metrics have been established to classify the building size as small, medium, or large. The table shown below presents the metrics adopted for the workbook.

Table 2 – Building Metrics

Category	Size	Range	Units
Residential	Small	1 - 4	Dwelling Units
	Medium	5 - 20	
	Large	> 20	
Retail	Small	1 - 50	Feet
	Medium	51 - 100	
	Large	> 100	
Office Space	Small	1 - 5,000	Square Footage
	Medium	5,001 - 10,000	
	Large	> 10,000	
Theater	Small	1 - 200	Capacity (original)
	Medium	201-1,000	
	Large	> 1,000	
Other	Small	1 - 20,000	Square Footage
	Medium	20,001 - 40,000	
	Large	> 40,000	

The size of a residential building is based on the number of dwelling units provided. The methodology does not account for the size of each unit. While some might argue that unit size is of importance, one must consider the tradeoff between refinement of the model versus the added burden of data collection and management. Building size based on dwelling units tends to be customary in demographic studies.

Retail buildings are sized according to the linear footage of the building along the street; they are not sized per their square footage. The basis for selecting linear footage rather than square footage is due to the effect of building orientation on the streetscape. For two rectangular

buildings of equal area, the one oriented parallel to the street will have a greater effect on the streetscape than one with a perpendicular orientation.

The categories of office space and “other” use square footage to establish building size. The metrics defined for office space reflect general real estate practice. No reference was found for “other” since it is a catch-all category that includes schools, government buildings, warehouses, churches, banks, museums, parking structures, and studios. Instead of basing size on a specific reference, square footage data for all buildings classified as “other” was compiled and ranked to select the ranges of large, medium, and small buildings.

Theater size is based on original seating capacity. It is assumed that the original capacity best reflects the overall size of the building. While some theaters may have reduced seating capacity in response to a changing market, or they may have removed seating for entertainment space, the overall envelope of the building remains the same. Another benefit of using original seating capacity is the ease of finding such data online.

Visual Condition or Aesthetics

The next step of the methodology is to rate each building in terms of its visual condition or aesthetic effect. For a given style of building, what is its “wow” factor? Is the building an excellent or good example of a given style, does it clearly reflect a given period of significance? The scale employed includes four levels of visual condition:

Excellent – All or most of the buildings character defining features are present. The building clearly denotes a given style or period of significance. The building is most impressive to the viewer.

Good – Some character defining features are still present. The building may be covered by limited signage but not enough to hide its overall form. A small or moderate amount of maintenance and/or restoration of missing features would move the building from a classification level of good to excellent.

Fair – A few character-defining features may still be present, or existing features may be hidden by a false facade. If character-defining features are known to be present under the facade then a rating of good may apply. The building may be purely utilitarian, but its presence does not detract from the overall aesthetics of the area.

Poor – No character defining features remain or they were never present. The building is rundown and in disrepair. The presence of the building distracts from the aesthetics of the area.

In reviewing the workbook, some have asked why the assessment is limited to visual condition rather than historic integrity. Historic integrity accounts for location, setting, design, materials,

workmanship, feeling, and association. The assessment of historic integrity requires in-depth research and specialized knowledge. Thus, the historic integrity of a building is best addressed during the designation process that may follow prioritization.

Accessibility

In selecting the Hollywood District, one aspect regarding the importance of historic buildings to the streetscape is their general accessibility. Historic buildings located near the two Metro stations on Hollywood Blvd are much more likely to be viewed by tourists and visitors than the historic buildings located on Franklin Ave or Sunset Blvd.

Per an economic study published by the Hollywood Business Improvement District, most people using the Metro system only venture about 0.5 miles from each terminal. Keeping this distance in mind, the following scale was applied regarding accessibility:

Great – The building is located less than or equal to 0.25 miles from closest station

Good – The building is located more than 0.25 miles but less than or equal to 0.5 miles from the closest station

Okay – The building is located more than 0.5 miles but less than or equal to 0.75 miles from the closest station

Remote – The building is located more than 0.75 miles from closest Metrorail station

The inclusion of a criterion related to accessibility is not to say that the protection of all historic buildings is not important. Accessibility is included so as to recognize the role location plays relative to the streetscape and viewer experience. Many historic areas do not cater to tourist trade, such as a residential HPOZ, so the issue of accessibility may not apply.

DATA COLLECTION

The companion workbook presents all of the building data collected for the Hollywood district. The tables that follow present the compiled results for the area: number of buildings and their status (Table 3), the number of buildings by size and function (Table 4), the number of buildings by their visual aesthetics (Table 5), and the number of buildings by accessibility (Table 6).

Table 3 – Building Status

Category	Total	Status		
		Active	Vacant	Demo
All Buildings	359	263	39	57
HCM Designated	48	39	5	4
HCM Rejected	16	11	1	4

Overall, a total of 359 historic buildings and 4 facades have been identified within the area. Out of the 359 buildings, 39 are vacant, 263 are active, and 57 have been demolished since the first survey work began. Fifteen percent of the active buildings are designated at the local level as HCMs. At the State and Federal level, many more buildings are designated.

It is difficult to provide an exact count of all designated buildings since some buildings carry multiple designations. A few buildings along Hollywood Blvd are contributors to the designated National District and they are designated individually as HCMs.

Table 4 – Buildings by Size and Function

Category	Total	Size		
		Small	Medium	Large
Residential	134	28	36	70
Retail	114	26	38	50
Office Space	72	15	13	44
Theater	17	0	7	10
Other	29	8	19	2
Total	366	77	113	176

The majority of buildings located within the Hollywood area are classified as large. The area is dominated by large commercial and entertainment venues, as well as high-density apartment buildings. Two small historic districts composed of single-family housing remain.

A point worth noting in Table 4 is that the total number of buildings listed exceeds the true total number of buildings shown in Table 3. Excluding demolished buildings, there are 302 active and vacant historic buildings in the area. The reason for the difference in count is that a building may fall under one or more categories of use.

Of all the criteria included in this workbook, the rating of visual aesthetics (Table 5) is most open to debate due to its subjective nature. The ratings assigned in this exercise are the sole product of the author, working from street view images from Google Maps. Ideally, building assessment would include a site visit by a dedicated team of individuals followed by a consensus vote. Such work awaits a future iteration of the workbook.

Table 5 – Visual Aesthetic

Status	Visual Aesthetic				
	Total	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Active	263	80	118	60	5
Vacant	39	5	13	14	7
Total	302	85	131	74	12

The Hollywood District is served by two Metro stations; one located to the east of Vine St and the second to the west of Highland Ave. All of the historic buildings within the area are located no more than 0.75 miles from one of these two Metro stations.

Table 6 – Accessibility Via Metro Stations

Status	Metro Station Accessibility				
	Total	Great	Good	Okay	Remote
Active	263	77	142	44	0
Vacant	39	10	26	3	0
Total	302	87	168	47	0

BUILDING IMPORTANCE

The assessment model assumes that the relative importance of each building is a function of size, visual condition, and accessibility. To obtain an overall score for ranking, the qualitative ratings (i.e., small, medium, or large) must be converted to a numeric score that can then be used to produce an overall score. The formula for “Building Importance” is:

$$\text{Building Importance} = \text{Size} \times \text{Visual Condition} \times \text{Accessibility}$$

For building size, the assigned score ranges from 1 to 5 points and it accounts for no more than two of the largest uses per building. As shown in Table 7, a single use building receives a score of 1 to 3 points dependent on size. An additional 1 or 2 points are added for a second use that is medium or large in size. No extra point is given for a second use that is small.

Table 7 – Building Size Ratings

Size	Small	Medium	Large
One Only	1	2	3
Small	1	2	3
Medium	---	3	4
Large	---	---	5

The numeric scores assigned to visual condition and accessibility use identical scales: 3 points for excellent or great, 2 points for good, 1 point for fair or okay, and 0 points for poor or remote. The total number of points possible is 45 points, with 0 points for a building in poor condition or if located more than 0.75 miles from a Metro station.

Table 8 presents the results of this exercise for all buildings receiving 20 points or more. Thirty-eight buildings are identified as high ranking out of the three hundred two active and vacant buildings. Seven buildings rated 40 points or more, nine buildings rated 30 points or more but

less than 40, and twenty-two buildings rated 20 points or more but less than 30. Five buildings within this group are vacant.

Table 8 – The Ranking of Historic Buildings

Entry #	Title	Address	Status	Importance			
				Size	Aesthetic	Access	Score
95	Pantages Theater	6233 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	3	3	45
96	Equitable Building	6253 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	3	3	45
98	Taft Building & Sign	6280 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	3	3	45
99	Broadway Dept Store & Sign	6300 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	3	3	45
172	Los Angeles First Federal	6777 Hollywood Blvd	Vacant	5	3	3	45
176	El Capitan Theater	6834 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	3	3	45
188	Hollywood Professional Building	7046 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	3	3	45
88	Max Factor Museum, Mel's Diner	1666 Highland Ave	Active	4	3	3	36
167	Montmartre	6755 Hollywood Blvd	Active	4	3	3	36
112	Palmer Building	6362 Hollywood Blvd	Vacant	5	2	3	30
125	Warner Hollywood Theater	6423 Hollywood Blvd	Vacant	5	3	2	30
158	Outpost Building	6715 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	2	3	30
180	Max Factor Building	6922 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	2	3	30
265	Columbia Square, CBS	6121 Sunset Blvd	Active	5	3	2	30
266	Hollywood Palladium	6215 Sunset Blvd	Active	5	3	2	30
287	Crossroads of the World	6671 Sunset Blvd	Active	5	3	2	30
106	Guaranty Building	6331 Hollywood Blvd	Active	3	3	3	27
157	Grauman's Egyptian Theater	6708 Hollywood Blvd	Active	3	3	3	27
164	Pickwick Books, Taco Bell	6743 Hollywood Blvd	Active	3	3	3	27
177	Hollywood Masonic Temple	6840 Hollywood Blvd	Active	3	3	3	27
182	Hollywood Roosevelt	7000 Hollywood Blvd	Active	3	3	3	27
241	Nirvana Apartments	1775 Orange Dr	Active	3	3	3	27
243	Amor Arms	1759 Orchid Ave	Active	3	3	3	27
295	Palacio Apartments	1665 Sycamore Ave	Active	3	3	3	27
314	Hollywood Playhouse	1735 Vine St	Active	3	3	3	27
315	Capitol Tower & Rooftop Sign	1750 Vine St	Active	3	3	3	27
132	Hillview Apartments	6531 Hollywood Blvd	Active	4	3	2	24
142	S H Kress Building	6608 Hollywood Blvd	Vacant	4	3	2	24
169	Hollywood Wax Museum	6765 Hollywood Blvd	Active	4	2	3	24
175	Stores, Samesun Hotel	6806 Hollywood Blvd	Active	4	2	3	24
179	Seven Seas	6904 Hollywood Blvd	Active	4	2	3	24
181	Grauman's Chinese Theater	6925 Hollywood Blvd	Active	4	3	2	24
310	Hollywood Plaza Hotel & Sign	1633 Vine St	Active	4	2	3	24
118	Security Trust and Savings	6381 Hollywood Blvd	Vacant	5	2	2	20
138	Hollywood Toys	6554 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	2	2	20
141	Baine Building	6601 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	2	2	20
149	Shane Building	6652 Hollywood Blvd	Active	5	2	2	20
270	Sunset Vine Tower	6290 Sunset Blvd	Active	5	2	2	20
	= Historic Building with Score Greater Than or Equal to 40 Points						
	= Historic Building with Score Greater Than or Equal to 30 Points but Less Than 40 Points						
	= Historic Building with Score Greater Than or Equal to 20 Points but Less Than 30 Points						

DESIGNATION PRIORITY

Having developed a numeric score for ranking the importance of each building, the next step is to assess the level of risk posed by the potential loss of the building. Building loss may be due to neglect, abandonment, insensitive renovation, or demolition. The designation priority for a given building is a function of its importance and the risk of loss.

Table 9 presents the numeric multipliers that are used in the workbook to adjust each building score to provide a rating of designation priority. A multiplier of 3 is assigned to a building that may be eligible for designation, or its status is not assessed or unknown. A multiplier of 0 is applied to buildings that are listed as an HCM or contributor to an HPOZ. The use of 0 should not be taken to mean that there is no risk to these buildings, but instead, that short of buying the building, there are few remaining protective actions left to be taken.

Table 9 – Designation Priority Matrix

Historic Asset	Priority		
	Protection	Risk	Points
Listed Building			
National Register	Medium	Medium	2
State Register	Medium	Medium	2
Local Register (HCM)	High	Very Low	0
Eligible	Low	High	3
Demolished	N/A	None	0
Listed Districts - National			
Contributors	Medium	Medium	2
Non-Contributors	Low / None	High	3
Listed Districts - State			
Contributors	Medium	Medium	2
Non-Contributors	Low / None	High	3
Listed Districts - Local (HPOZ)			
Contributors	High	Very Low	0
Non-Contributors	Low / Medium	Medium	2

The workbook does not attempt to assess the actual level of risk posed by loss, and it is unclear if a comprehensive approach is possible. Communities can watch for, and monitor, abandoned or neglected buildings, but how does one monitor the future plans for a building? Waiting for a demolition notice to be posted is no longer a viable trigger for starting the nomination process if the project involves “in fill” housing.

For the workbook, the level of risk is taken to be the inverse of the level of protection provided by the building’s current historic designation with local designation providing the highest level

of protection. Many people believe that designation as a Federal landmark represents the highest level of protection possible, followed by State designation, and then local designation or listing. In fact, the opposite is true.

Listing on the National Register is honorific, offering recognition and limited protection from federal projects. Local designation is typically regulatory, intended to protect the community's unique character through design reviews and ordinances. Even the non-contributors within an HPOZ can be covered by design guidelines so as to protect the feel and setting of the district. The protection of non-contributors is not provided within a Federal district.

Table 10 presents the designation priority scores for the top 40 ranked buildings in the district. This list may serve as a selection guide for the filing of new HCM designations. The workbook includes the ratings for all buildings in the district.

Given the amount of time and effort that goes into the preparation of an HCM application, having a prioritized list should help focus the effort and make the process less reactive. In addition, having a list helps promote the economy of scale. Nominations can be grouped by common themes, so that the first application serves as boilerplate for subsequent ones.

IN CLOSING

The historic building assessment workbook compiles a large amount of survey data for the Hollywood district, and it uses this data to prioritize buildings for HCM designation. The workbook is intended to answer the question "where do we start?" Having a prioritized list of buildings is an essential first step to being proactive rather than reactive.

For all other communities, the workbook may serve as a potential model for prioritizing their preservation efforts. The model is easily adapted to include additional metrics. Armed with a copy of the workbook and this report, one should easily be able to recreate a similar tool for their community. Questions and comments should be directed to the author at his Substack page thedustyarchive@substack.com.

Table 10 – Designation Priority Ranking – Top 40 Buildings

Entry #	Title	Address	Priority		
			Importance	Risk	Score
172	Los Angeles First Federal	6777 Hollywood Blvd	45	2	90
180	Max Factor Building	6922 Hollywood Blvd	30	3	90
243	Amor Arms	1759 Orchid Ave	27	3	81
295	Palacio Apartments	1665 Sycamore Ave	27	3	81
167	Montmartre	6755 Hollywood Blvd	36	2	72
112	Palmer Building	6362 Hollywood Blvd	30	2	60
158	Outpost Building	6715 Hollywood Blvd	30	2	60
270	Sunset Vine Tower	6290 Sunset Blvd	20	3	60
9	Stores	1641 Cahuenga Blvd	18	3	54
25	Admiral Apartments	1842 Cherokee Ave	18	3	54
35	Chateau Alto Nido Apts	6350 Franklin Ave	18	3	54
36	Lynne Manor	6400 Franklin Ave	18	3	54
51	Crippled Children's Society	7120 Franklin Ave	18	3	54
102	Stores	6320 Hollywood Blvd	18	3	54
106	Guaranty Building, Scientology	6331 Hollywood Blvd	27	2	54
111	Stores	6356 Hollywood Blvd	18	3	54
164	Pickwick, Taco Bell Cantina	6743 Hollywood Blvd	27	2	54
202	Hollywood Ivar Building	1741 Ivar Ave	18	3	54
227	Miceli's Italian Restaurant	1646 Las Palmas Ave	18	3	54
231	Hotel and Apartments	1519 McCadden Pl	18	3	54
237	Holly View Apartments	1737 Orange Dr	18	3	54
238	Hollywood Biltmore	1745 Orange Dr	18	3	54
245	Graybrook Apartments	1772 Orchid Ave	18	3	54
246	Hollywood Orchid Apartments	1778 Orchid Ave	18	3	54
248	Hollywood Embassy	1782 Orchid Ave	18	3	54
271	Bank of America	6300 Sunset Blvd	18	3	54
273	RCA, Los Angeles Film School	6363 Sunset Blvd	18	3	54
296	Parking Structure	1670 Sycamore Ave	18	3	54
298	Hollywood Sycamore	1737 Sycamore Ave	18	3	54
299	The Charleston	1749 Sycamore Ave	18	3	54
307	Ricardo Montalban Theater	1615 Vine St	18	3	54
314	Palace Theater	1735 Vine St	27	2	54
353	Multi-Family Residence	6211 Yucca St	18	3	54
4	Groundwork Coffee	1501 Cahuenga Blvd	16	3	48
132	Hillview Apartments	6531 Hollywood Blvd	24	2	48
142	S H Kress	6608 Hollywood Blvd	24	2	48
169	Hollywood Wax Museum	6765 Hollywood Blvd	24	2	48
175	Stores, Samesun Hotel	6806 Hollywood Blvd	24	2	48
179	Seven Seas	6904 Hollywood Blvd	24	2	48
108	Stores, I Magnin & Company	6338 Hollywood Blvd	15	3	45